Tanzania Food Security Report: February 13, 2003

Summary

- **The national food security condition was satisfactory in January.**
- **The government has approved a proposal to distribute approximately 7,200 MT of subsidized maize to around 33,000 people in nine districts. Supplies will be drawn from the Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR).**
- **Approval was also given to distribute seed aid (maize, sorghum, beans and peas) to about 33,700 households in eight districts. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has been asked to supply the required seed.**
- **Wholesale maize prices remain stable, even where price rises were noted between December and January. The rise is consistent with past trends, and prices are still below last year and the five year averages.**
- **Rainfall was mixed, as is crop performance. A clearer picture will emerge when the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security completes the crop assessment and food situation study planned for February-March.**

1. Current Food Security Overview

The national food security condition was satisfactory in January. The recent (and ongoing) short rains (*vuli)* and long rains harvests have increased stocks and food supplies at the household level in most of the bimodal rainfall areas and at the national level.

2. Response to the December Rapid Vulnerability Assessment (RVA) Report

In January the Tanzania Disaster Relief Committee (TANDREC) approved a plan to distribute approximately 7,200 MT of subsidized maize to around 177,000 persons in nine districts and seed aid (sorghum, peas, maize and beans) to about 33,700 households in eight districts. This enacts two of the three main recommendations from the Rapid Vulnerability Assessment (RVA) report, released by the Food Security Information Team (FSIT) in December.

TANREC's decision was welcome, but came later than hoped, since the RVA's recommendations stated that interventions should start in January. Further delays in implementation could be detrimental, especially in the following areas: those with unimodal rainfall pattern where the next crop harvest is not expected until around June; those where performance of the *vuli* crop is inadequate; and those where harvesting of the *vuli* crop has not started. Food prices in such areas might rise, while income generating opportunities in rural areas are limited, potentially jeopardizing poor households' access to food supplies. Subsidized maize supplies from the SGR will help to keep food crop prices at affordable levels.

The subsidized maize will be drawn from the Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR) for sale to targeted households at TZS 100 per kg, TZS 50 less than the SGR's current prices of TZS150 per kg.

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Through the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the government requested assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to supply seed aid to the targeted beneficiaries. The government is still waiting to hear from FAO on this request. The seeds are intended for planting during the *masika* (long) rains, and these have already started in some areas, and are expected to start shortly in others. If seeds are not provided in time, farmers are likely to plant less land than normal, and most likely with less suitable varieties. This may result into food shortages during the 2003/04 marketing year.

The third recommendation of the RVA was to monitor crop performance in Magu district (Mwanza Region) and Rombo district (Kilimanjaro region) during the *vuli* rains and in Sikonge district (Tabora region) during the long rains.

Preliminary monitoring information from Rombo, Magu and Sikonge Districts is mixed. Good crop performance has been reported in Sikonge district, where the supply of root crops is satisfactory and expectations are high for a good maize harvest. As a result, farmers are selling off their stocks from last season, lowering the area's maize, paddy and rice prices by between 9 and 23 percent this January, compared to December last year.

In Rombo district the situation is also promising. Although the *vuli* maize harvest has not started yet, expectations are high. Local prices support this optimism; a 100 Kg bag of maize was selling for TZS 12,000 in October 2002 but sold for TZS 9,000 in January 2003.

Prospects are not good in Magu district, however, where the *vuli* rains ended early at the beginning of January. Farmers had, apparently, planted more maize than sorghum, and the early stop to the *vuli* rains damaged the growing maize. Since the *masika* rains are unlikely to begin before March, the maize is not expected to recover. These negative prospects are reflected in the higher maize prices, which have increased from TZS 2,100 per tin to TZS 2,400 per tin between November 2002 and January 2003.

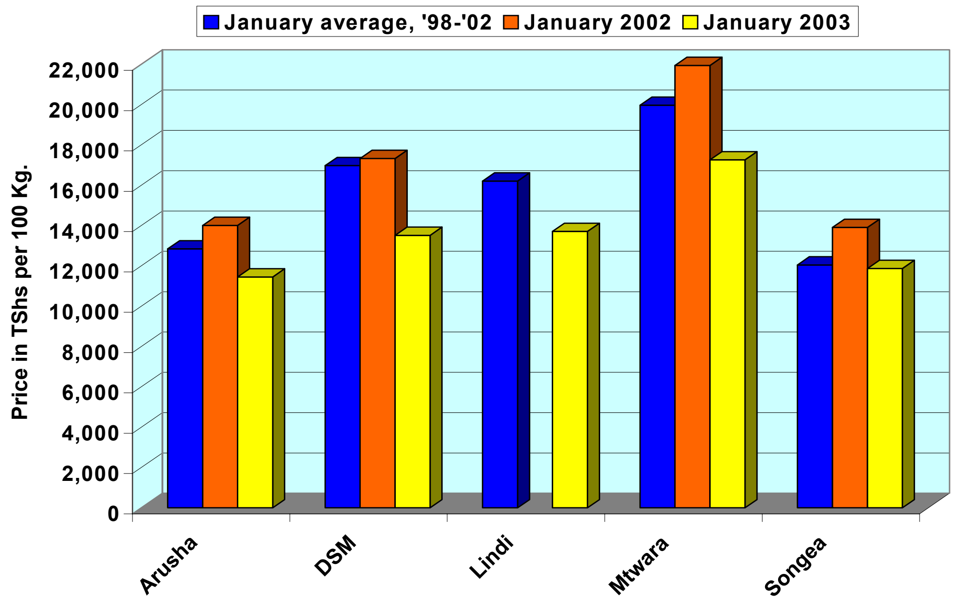
The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) is planning to conduct a crop and food security situation assessment during February-March. This study will provide more information on the performance of crops planted during the *vuli* rains, including in the districts of Magu, Rombo and Sikonge (long rains for this district), and a detailed assessment of the current national food security condition.

3. Wholesale Prices for Maize

Wholesale maize prices remained relatively stable on most of the key markets between December and January. However, price increases of between 10 and 20 percent were observed in five markets, including Lindi and Mtwara (South Coast), Songea (Rukwa Region, Southern Highlands), Arusha (Northern Tanzania) and Dar es Salaam (East Coast).

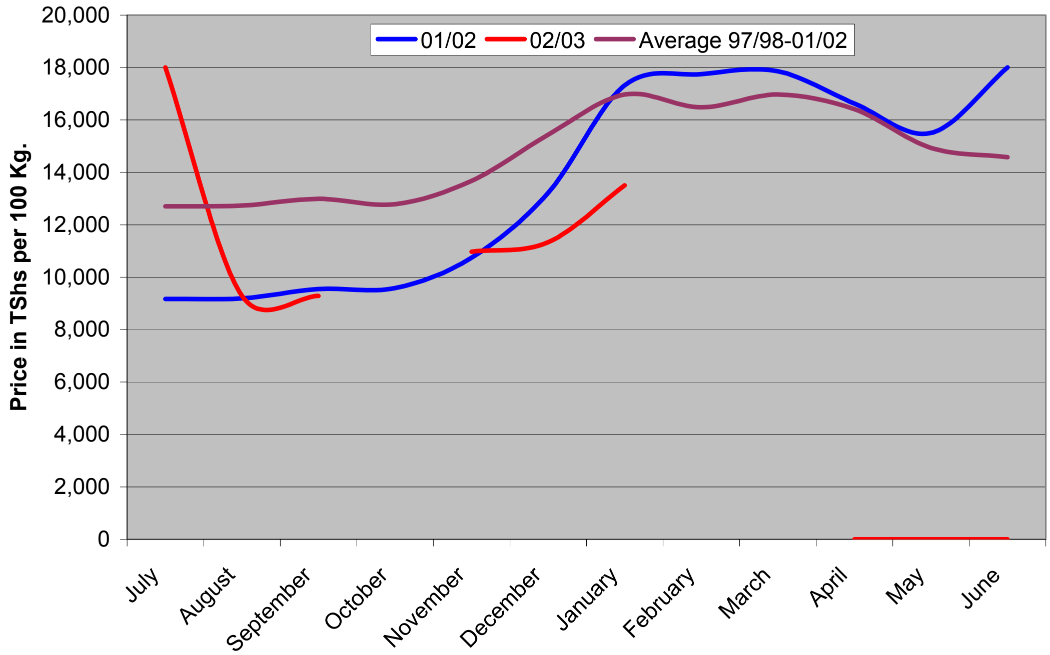
These price increases are not alarming when considered in view of past trends. On most of the noted markets, prices were lower than the January prices for both the five-year average (1998-2002) and last year (Figure 1). Moreover, the July 2002-January 2003 maize wholesale average price trend in the Dar es Salaam market, representing a typical seasonal pattern, is similar to the five-year average (July 1997-June 2001) and July 2001-June 2002 trends (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Average wholesale maize prices for selected markets



FEWS NET/Tanzania
Source: Ministry of Cooperatives and Marketing

Figure 2: Trends for maize wholesale prices in Dar es Salaam



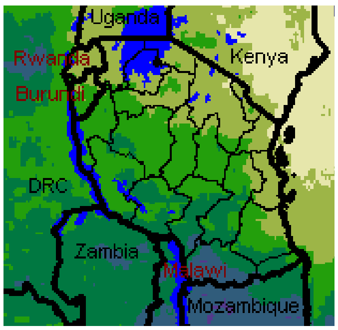
FEWS NET/Tanzania
Source: Ministry of Cooperatives ad Marketing

4. Rainfall, vegetation conditions and crop performance

Figure 3 presents satellite data for the past four dekads (January 1 to February 10, 2003). Compared to the long term average, rainfall was generally normal to below normal in most parts of the country, with the exception of parts of Lindi (South Coast) and Ruvuma (Southern Highlands) Regions, where rainfall was much below normal and above normal, respectively.

Figure 3: Current and Long term average Meteosat Rainfall Estimates (RFE)

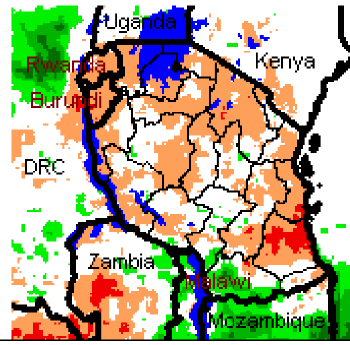
Current, January 1- February 10, 2003



Legend

JAN-FEB
- No Rain/Dry
- Very Low Rains
- Low Rains
- Moderate Rains
- Heavy Rains
- Very Heavy Rains
- Extremely Heavy

Current (January 1- February 10, 2003) vs. long term average



Legend

JAN-FEB
- Much Below
- Below Normal
- Normal Conditions
- Above Normal
- Much Above

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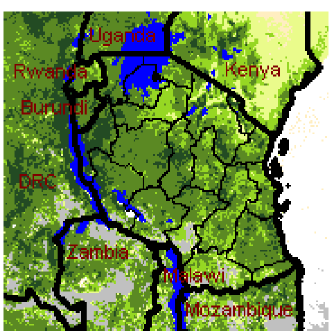
Source: NASA, USGS

Vegetation for February 1-10, as indicated by the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), for February 1-10

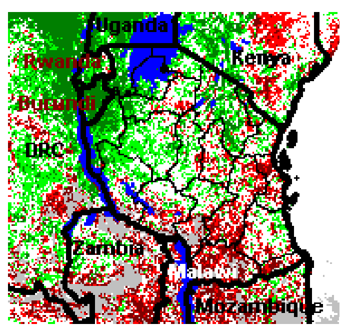
a) Current (2003)



Legend

- Dry
- Semi-Arid
- Very Light Veg.
- Light Veg.
- Medium Veg
- Heavy Veg.
- Dense Veg
- Very Dense Veg.
- Clouds
- No Data
- Water

b) Current vs. Long Term Average



Legend

- Clouds
- Much Worse
- Slightly Worse
- No Change
- Slightly Better
- Much Better
- LAKE

FEWS NET/Tanzania
Source: NASA, USGS

In general, compared to the long term average, vegetation was slightly better in the western and northern regions, mixed in the central regions and slightly worse to much worse in the coastal and southern regions (Figure 4b).

Crops performance is satisfactory for most areas, and harvesting is ongoing or likely to start soon. However, in some places, such as Nzega and Igunga districts in Tabora region, Dodoma region as well as Magu, Misungwi and Kwimba districts in Mwanza region, an extended mid-season dry spell (normally lasting a few weeks between January and February, but lasting longer this year) has led to unsatisfactory conditions. While paddy that was already transplanted in some of these areas has dried up or is stunted, there are fears that, in some parts, maize may not recover fully when the *masika* rains start in March.

The armyworm outbreak in Dodoma region, reported in recent months, has been stopped by the effective distribution and application of pesticides distributed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in December. No serious crop damage resulted.

5. Food Security Outlook for the Coming 4 Months

Overall prospects for food security in the coming four month are good. Short rains crop performance is good in most parts of the country and harvesting is ongoing or expected to start soon in some areas.

In certain districts where subsidized food supplies were recommended, staple food price rises could limit poor households' access to food, unless the subsidized food program is implemented quickly. Since the government has already approved the recommendation, it is hoped that this food will be delivered soon.

Updates on the national and household crop production and food security situation will follow the MAFS assessment, planned for February-March. Particular attention should go to the districts where crops planted during the recent rains are reported to be at risk of wilting due to a longer than expected dry spell.